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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - MIDDLE EAST - GAZA PULLOUT  
IRAQ  
PARIS - WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 17, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

MIDDLE EAST - GAZA PULLOUT  
IRAQ

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

FRONT PAGES ARE OVERWHELMINGLY DEVOTED TO YESTERDAY'S CRASH OF A CHARTERED WEST CARIBBEAN MD 11 AIRCRAFT CARRYING 153 FRENCH TOURISTS FROM PANAMA TO MARTINIQUE AND TO RELATED STORIES ON AIR SAFETY AND CHARTER COMPANIES. THE ISRAELI PULLOUT FROM GAZA IS TODAY'S MAIN INTERNATIONAL STORY ELICITING WIDE COVERAGE AND EDITORIAL ANALYSIS. (SEE PART C) RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO ANALYZES THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE PULLOUT FOR SHARON AND ABBAS IN TWO SEPARATE REPORTS. WHEREAS SHARON'S "POLITICAL FUTURE LIES IN THE SUCCESS OF THE PULLOUT," THIS SAME PULLOUT IS "FULL OF UNCERTAINTIES" FOR MAHMOUD ABBAS, "WHO HAS FEW ASSETS TO OFFER THE PEOPLE OF GAZA. AND WHO IS WEAKENED FROM WITHIN." POPULAR RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE PARISIEN INTERVIEWS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY IN FRANCE, LEILA SHAHID: "THE GAZA PULLOUT IS A START. BUT IF WE DO NOT HAVE SOVEREIGNTY OVER BORDER POINTS OF ENTRY WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO CONTROL EXPORTS OR THE CIRCULATION OF GOODS AND PEOPLE NECESSARY FOR THE ECONOMIC REVIVAL OF GAZA. BEHIND THE GAZA PULLOUT, WHICH IS ELICITING SUPPORT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, SHARON IS PRACTICALLY ANNEXING EAST JERUSALEM AND THE WEST BANK. BEHIND THE POSITIVE INITIATIVE OF GAZA, SHARON IS MAKING THE ANNEXATION OF THE WEST BANK IRREVERSIBLE."

REPORTS ON IRAQ AND THE POSTPONED CONSTITUTION ARE NUMEROUS, WHILE LE FIGARO CARRIES A SEPARATE ARTICLE ON THE DWINDLING NUMBER OF COALITION MEMBERS FURTHER TO THE JAPANESE DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S CALL FOR WITHDRAWAL OF JAPANESE TROOPS FROM IRAQ. (SEE PART C) IN CATHOLIC LA CROIX GILLES BIASSETTE DRAFTS A PORTRAIT OF CINDY SHEEHAN AND HER SIT-IN IN FRONT OF THE CRAWFORD RANCH: "SHE HAS BECOME THE MEDIA'S DARLING JUST WHEN THE LATEST POLLS INDICATE THAT A MAJORITY OF AMERICANS CONSIDER THE WAR IN IRAQ TO HAVE BEEN A MISTAKE. WORST EVEN, PUBLIC OPINION DOES NOT BELIEVE THE WAR CAN BE WON."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

MIDDLE EAST - GAZA PULLOUT  
"WRENCHING EXODUS"

DOMINIQUE QUINIO IN CATHOLIC LA CROIX (08/17): "THEIR SUFFERING IS DEEP. BUT BECAUSE THE SETTLERS' DEPARTURE IS SUCH A WRENCHING EXPERIENCE IT MAY ALSO CARRY THE SEEDS OF HOPE. BECAUSE THE WOUNDS IN THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT ARE SO PAINFUL, PEACE CANNOT COME WITHOUT DIFFICULT CONCESSIONS. LIKE THE GOOD STRATEGIST THAT HE IS, SHARON IS PUTTING ON ABBAS'S SHOULDERS THE ONUS OF THE NEXT STEP. IT IS UP TO HIM TO SHOW PROOF OF HIS WILLINGNESS TO RETURN TO A DIALOGUE. YET BOTH SHARON AND ABBAS STAND AT THE BEGINNING OF THE ROAD. MORE THAN EVER THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY NEEDS TO SUPPORT THEIR EFFORTS IF THEY WANT TO GRASP THIS TENUOUS OPPORTUNITY."

"GAZA, HOPE AND THE FENCE"

FRANCOISE CROUGNEAU IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LES ECHOS (08/17): "THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE PULLOUT FROM GAZA IS A HISTORIC EVENT. YET EVERYONE IS AWARE THAT THE FUTURE OF JERUSALEM, THE BORDERS OF ISRAEL AND THE CREATION OF A PALESTINIAN STATE WILL NOT BE DECIDED IN GAZA. STILL THE SEED OF PEACE AND PROSPERITY CAN GROW. THIS IS WHAT THE U.S., THE EUROPEANS AND MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS WANT TO BELIEVE. FOR A TIME, THE SKEPTICS ARE WILLING TO TURN A BLIND EYE ON SHARON'S ULTERIOR MOTIVES OR HAMAS'S ABILITY TO FUEL A NEW STRATEGY OF TERROR. THEY ARE READY TO GET TO WORK. MORE THAN THE 3 BILLION DOLLARS PROMISED BY THE G8 IN JULY, CONCRETE GESTURES ARE WHAT WILL PUT AN END TO ALL FORMS OF RETICENCE. JAMES WOLFENSOHN KNOWS IT FROM WHEN HE HEADED THE WORLD BANK. NOW THAT HE IS THE QUARTET'S FACILITATOR BETWEEN THE ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS, WOLFENSOHN HAS SET THIS STRATEGY IN ACTION: HE IS DONATING FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS OF HIS PERSONAL FUNDS IN ORDER TO REASSURE AND ATTRACT POTENTIAL INVESTORS INTERESTED IN PERPETUATING THE HIGH-TECH AGRICULTURAL CONCERNS DEVELOPED BY

THE ISRAELI SETTLERS. EACH PLAYER MUST NOW GIVE TOKENS OF GOOD FAITH. THE ISRAELIS MUST ENSURE THE FREE CIRCULATION OF GOODS AND PEOPLE WITHOUT WHICH GAZA CANNOT SURVIVE. THE PALESTINIANS MUST TAKE OVER TO AVOID ARMED CONFRONTATIONS. THE QUARTET, WITH THE U.S. IN THE LEAD, MUST DO EVERYTHING TO AVOID A STRATEGY OF THE SCORCHED EARTH. SO THAT THE PULLOUT DOES NOT BECOME A SIMPLE INTERLUDE IN THE TOO LONG SAGA OF VIOLENCE."

#### IRAQ

##### "A NEW BLOW FOR THE COALITION"

TANGUY BERTHEMET IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (08/17): "THE COALITION IS SUFFERING. AFTER THE ITALIANS, THE JAPANESE DEMOCRATIC PARTY HAS NOW PUT FORTH THE IDEA OF NOT RENEWING JAPAN'S PRESENCE IN IRAQ AS A CAMPAIGN PLATFORM. WHILE THE JAPANESE DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S CHANCES OF VICTORY ARE SLIM, THE PROPOSAL HAS RE-OPENED THE DEBATE IN JAPAN ABOUT THE APPROPRIATENESS OF A JAPANESE PRESENCE IN IRAQ ALONGSIDE THE U.S. . WHILE THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION DID NOT REACT OFFICIALLY TO THE ITALIAN DECISION, WASHINGTON AND LONDON CAN NO LONGER IGNORE THE FACT THAT IT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO KEEP THE COALITION TOGETHER. FROM 37 IT HAS DWINDLED TO ABOUT TWENTY MEMBERS. AND WHILE THE SUPPORT FROM THESE NATIONS IS LARGELY SYMBOLIC COMPARED TO THE 140, 000 GIS PRESENT IN IRAQ, WITH LITTLE STRATEGIC IMPACT, THESE DEPARTURES MAKE MORE DELICATE THE 'SUBSTANTIAL REDUCTION' OF FORCES ENVISIONED BY GENERAL CASEY."

##### "BUSH JUSTIFIES POSTPONEMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION"

GUILLEMETTE FAURE IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (07/17): "FROM TEXAS PRESIDENT BUSH APPLAUDED 'THE HEROIC EFFORTS OF THE IRAQI NEGOTIATORS.' AND SECRETARY RICE INTERPRETED THE DELAY AS A SIGN 'THAT DEMOCRACY WAS AT WORK.' THE FACT THAT THIS DELAY DOES NOT FIT IN WITH WASHINGTON'S DESIRES IS THE SIGN IN BOTH THEIR EYES THAT THE WORLD IS INDEED IN THE PRESENCE OF AN IRAQI PROCESS. BUT THE DELAY COMES AT A BAD TIME. ACCORDING TO A PEW RESEARCH CENTER POLL, ONLY 27 PERCENT OF AMERICANS THINK PRESIDENT BUSH HAS A 'CLEAR PLAN' FOR IRAQ." HOFMANN